

PRECOCITY

MY mother bade me not to pass
Too near her shining looking-glass.
I thought it strange such things to say
To just a little girl at play ; —
And so one hour of mortal sin
I crept quite close and long looked in.
And, oh I saw within, I guess,
Something men call — a sorceress.

DOROTHEA MOORE.

SAVORY MEATS

IN THE bushy thicket the doe stood, trembling,
over the young one to which she had given birth
in the early part of the night. A light wind began to breathe just before dawn, and in its languid throbbing the slim twigs and half unfolded leaves from time to time rustled stiffly. Over the tree-tops, and from the open spaces in the wood, could be seen the first cold pallor of approaching day ; and one pink thread, a finger long, outlined a lonely fragment of the horizon. But in the bushy thicket it was dark. The mother could not see her little one, but kept feeling it anxiously and lightly with her silken nose. She was waiting till it should be strong enough to rise and nurse.

As the pink thread became scarlet and crept along a wider arc, and the cold light spread, there came from a far-off hillside the trailing echo of a howl. It was the cry of a wolf hunting alone. It hardly penetrated the depths of the bushy thicket ; but the doe heard it, and faced about to the point whence it came, and stamped angrily with slim, sharp hoof. Her muzzle was held

high, and her nostrils expanded tensely, weighing and analyzing every scent that came on the chill air. But the dread cry was not repeated. No smell of danger breathed in to her retreat. The light stole at last through the many-tangled branches. Then the little one struggled to its feet, its spotted sides still heaving under the stress of their new expansion; and the doe, with lowered head and neck bent far around, watched it with great eyes as it pressed its groping mouth against her udder and learned to feed.

Presently the sides of branch and stem and leaf, facing the dawn, took on a hue of pink. A male song-sparrow, not yet feeling quite at home after his journey from the south, sang hesitatingly from the top of a bush. A pair of crows squawked gutturally and confidentially in a tree-top, where they contemplated nesting. Everything was wet, but it was a tonic and stimulating wetness, like that of a vigorous young swimmer climbing joyously out of a cool stream. The air had a sharp savor, a smell of gummy, aromatic buds, and sappy twigs, and pungent young leaves. But the body of the scent, which seemed like the very person of Spring, was the effluence of the fresh earth, broken and turned up to the air by millions of tiny little thrusting blades. Presently, when the light fell into the thicket with a steeper slant, the doe stepped away and left her little one lying, hardly to be discerned, on a spotted heap of dead leaves and moss. She stole noiselessly out of the thicket. She was going to pasture on the sprouting grasses of a neighboring wild meadow, and to drink at the amber stream that bordered it. She knew that, in her absence, the little one's instinct would teach him to keep so still that no marauder's eye would be likely to detect him.

Two or three miles away from the thicket, in the heart of the same deep-wooded wilderness, stood a long, low-roofed log cabin on the edge of a narrow clearing. The yard was strewn with chips, some bright and new, the rest in varying stages of decay. A lean pig rooted among them, turning up the black soil that lay beneath. An axe and a black iron pot stood on the battered step before the door. In the window appeared the face of an old man, gazing blankly out upon the harsh-featured scene.

The room where the old man sat was roughly ceiled and walled with brown boards. The sunlight streamed in the window, showing the red stains of rust on the cracked kitchen stove, and casting an oblong figure of brightness on the faded patchwork quilt which covered the low bed in the corner. Two years earlier John Hackett had been an erect and powerful woodsman, strong in the task of carving himself a home out of the unyielding wilderness. Then, his wife had died of a swift congestion. A few weeks later he had been struck down with paralysis, from which he partly recovered to find himself grown suddenly senile and a helpless invalid. On his one son, Silas, fell the double task of caring for him and working the scant, half-subjugated farm.

Streaks and twines of yellowish white were scattered thickly amid the ragged blackness of the old man's hair and beard. The strong, gaunt lines of his features consorted strangely with the piteous weakness that now trembled in his eyes and on his lower lip. He sat in a big home-made easy chair which Silas had constructed for him by sawing a quarter-section out of a hog'shead. This rude frame the lad had lined laboriously with straw and coarse sacking, and his father had taken great delight in it.

A soiled quilt of blue, magenta and white squares wrapped the old man's legs as he sat by the window watching for Silas to come in. His withered hands picked ceaselessly at the quilt.

"I wish Si 'd come! I want my breakfast!" he kept repeating, now wistfully, now fretfully. His gaze wandered from the window to the stove, from the stove to the window, with slow regularity. When the pig came rooting into his line of vision, it vexed him, and he muttered peevishly to himself:

"That there hog 'll hev the whole place rooted up! I wish Si 'd come an' drive him out of that!"

At last Si came. The old man's face smoothed itself, and a loving light came into his eyes as the lad adjusted the pillow at his head. The doings of the hog were forgotten.

Si bustled about to get breakfast, the old man's eyes following every movement. The tea was placed on the back of the stove to draw. A plate of cold buckwheat cakes was brought out of the cupboard and set on the clumsy table. A cup, with its handle broken off, was half filled with molasses for "sweetenin'," and placed beside the buckwheat cakes. Then Si cut some thick slices of salt pork and began to fry them. They "sizzled" cheerfully in the pan, and to Si, with his vigorous morning appetite, the odour was rare and fine. But the old man was troubled by it. His hands picked faster at the quilt.

"Si," said he, in a quavering voice that rose and fell without regard to the force of the words, "I know ye can't help it, but my stomach's turned agin the salt pork! It's been a-comin' on me this long while, that I could n't eat it no more. An' now it's come! Pork, pork, pork — I can't eat it no more, Si! But there, I

know ye can't help it. Ye're a good boy, a kind son, Si, an' ye can't help it!"

Si went on turning the slices with an old fork, till the quavering voice stopped. Then he cried cheerfully:

"Try an' eat a leetle mite of it, father. This 'ere tea's *fine*, an' 'll sort of wash it down. An' while I'm a-workin' in the back field this mornin' I'll try an' think of somethin' to kinder tickle your appetite!"

The old man shook his head gloomily.

"I can't eat no more fried pork, Si," said he. "Not if I die for it! I know ye can't help it. An' it do n't matter, fur I won't be here much longer, anyways. It 'll be a sight better fur you, Si, when I'm gone—but I kinder do n't like to leave ye here all alone. Seems like I kinder keep the house warm fur ye till ye come home! I do n't like to think of ye comin' in an' findin' the house all empty, Si! But it's been powerful empty, with jist you an' me, sence mother died. It useter be powerful good, Si, did n't it, comin' home an' findin' her a-awaitin' fur us, an' the hot supper ready on the table, an' the lamp a-shinin' cheerful? An' what suppers she could cook! D' ye mind the pies, an' the stews, an' the fried deer's meat? I could eat some of that fried deer's meat now, Si. An' I feel like it would make me better. It ain't no fault of yourn, Si, but I can't eat no more salt pork!"

Si lifted the half-browned slices of yellow and crimson onto a plate, poured the gravy over them, and set the plate on the table. Then he dragged his father's chair over to the table, helped him to tea, and buckwheat cakes, and molasses, and sat down to his own meal. The fried pork disappeared swiftly in his strong young jaws, while his father nibbled reluctantly at the cold and soggy cakes. Si cleared the table, fed the fire, dragged

his father back to the sunny window, and then took down the long gun, with the powder-horn and shot-pouch, which hung on pegs behind the door.

The old man noticed what he was doing.

"Ain't ye goin' to work in the back field, Si?" he asked plaintively.

"No, father!" said the lad. "I'm going a-gunnin'. Ef I don't have some o' that fried deer's meat fur your supper to-night, like mother useter fix fur ye, my name ain't Silas Hackett!"

He set a tin of fresh water on the window-ledge, within reach of his father's hand, gave one tender touch to the pillow, and went out quickly. The old man's eyes strained after him till he disappeared in the woods.

Silas walked with the noiseless speed of the trained woodsman. His heart was big with pity for his father, and heavy with a sense of approaching loss. But instinctively his eyes took note of the new life beginning to surge about him in myriad and tumultuous activity. It surged, too, in the answering current of his strong young blood; and from time to time he would forget his heaviness utterly for a moment, thrilled through and through by a snatch of bird-song, or a glimpse of rose-red maple-buds, or a gleam of ineffable blueness through the tree-tops, or a strange, clean-smelling wind that made him stop and stretch his lungs to take it in. Suddenly he came upon a fresh deer-track.

The sorcery of spring was forgotten. His heaviness was forgotten. He was now just the hunter, keen upon the trail of the quarry. Bending low, silent as a shadow, peering like a panther, he slipped between the great trunks, and paused in the fringe of downy-catkin'd willows that marked the meadow's edge. On the other side of the meadow he saw the form of a doe, drinking.

He heard, on the wet air, the sharp, chiming brawl of the brook, fretted by some obstruction. He took a careful aim. The doe lifted her head, satisfied, and ready to return to her young one in the thicket. A shot rang out across the meadow, and she sprang into the air, to fall back with her slender muzzle in the stream, her forelegs bent beneath her, her hindlegs twitching convulsively for a moment before they stiffened out upon the grass.

As Silas staggered homeward he was no longer the keen hunter. He no longer heard the summons of the spring morning. All he thought of was the pleasure which would light up the wan and piteous face of the old man in the chair by the window, when the savory smell of the frying deer's meat should fill the dusky air of the cabin. As he crossed the chip-strewn yard he saw his father's face watching for him. He dropped his burden at the door, and entered, panting and triumphant.

"I've got it fur ye, father!" he cried, softly touching the tremulous hands with his big brown fingers.

"I'm right glad, Si," quavered the old man, "but I'm a site gladder to see ye back! The hours is long when ye're not by me! Oh, but ye do mind me of your mother, Si!"

Si took the carcass to the shed, dressed it carefully, and then, after cutting several thick slices from the haunch, stowed it in the black little hole of a cellar beneath the cabin floor. He put some fair potatoes to boil, and proceeded to fry the juicy steaks which the old man loved. The fragrance of them presently filled the cabin. The old man's eyes grew brighter, and his hands less tremulous. When the smoking and sputtering dish was set on the table, Silas again drew up the big chair, and the two made a joyous meal. The old man ate as

he had not eaten for months, and the generous warmth of the fresh meat put new life into his withered veins. His under lip grew firmer, his voice steadier, his brain more clear. With a gladness that brought tears into his eyes, Silas marked the change.

"Father," he cried, "ye look more like yerself than I've seen ye these two year past!"

And the old man replied, with a ring of returning hope in his voice:

"This 'ere deer's meat's more 'n any medicine. Ef I git well, ever, seems to me it'll be accordin' to what I eat or don't eat, more 'n anything else!"

"Whatever ye think'll help ye, that ye shall hev, father," declared Silas, "ef I hev to crawl on hands an' knees all day an' all night fur it!"

Meanwhile, in the heart of the bushy thicket, on the spotted heap of leaves and moss, lay the little fawn, waiting for its mother. It was trembling now with hunger and chill. But its instinct kept it silent all day long. The afternoon light died out. Twilight brought a bitter chill to the depths of the thicket. When night came, hunger, cold, and fear at last overcame the little one's muteness. From time to time it gave a plaintive cry, then waited, and listened for its mother's coming. The cry was feeble, but there were keen ears in the forest to catch it. There came a stealthy crackling in the bushes, and the fawn struggled to its feet with a little cry of glad expectation. Two green eyes, close to the ground, floated near. There was a pounce, a scuffle — and then the soft, fierce, whispering sound of a wildcat satisfying itself with blood.

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.



A BUCCANEER CHORUS

THEY say the Devil has fled from Hell
To sail on the Spanish Main ;—
By the yoke of the Spell—the Folk say well
When they say that the Devil has fled from hell.

From out the Sea-Born Sunset is cast a crimson
tinge,

With a Yo, and a Ho, from a Band of Four-
score Men,—

The Gates of Hell yawn redly upon the
World's grey hinge,

And we sail to the Postern to see the Devils
cringe,

With a Yo, and a Ho, from a band of Four-
score Men.

The Sea moans Dead Men's Dirges, Shapes
muster Soul on Soul,

With a Yo, and a Ho, from a Band of Four-
score Men,—

There creeps a Cloud before us, an ashen
aureole—

The Beast of Hell has littered, and Morgan
is her foal!

With a Yo, and a Ho, from a Band of Four-
score Men.

And Life is but a Tavern, so let us stay and Sup,
With a Yo, and a Ho, from a Band of Four-
score Men,—

And Death is in the Taproom and Hell is in
the Cup,

And Death's a Merry Gentleman, so drink
the potion up ;

With a Yo, and a Ho, from a Band of Four-
score Men.

For though Life is worth the Living, when Life
is on the Sea,

With a Yo, and a Ho, from a Band of Four-
score Men,—

And it's worth the Devil's forfeit to let the arm
swing free,

And show the Spanish Dastards what Men
the Rovers be ;

With a Yo, and a Ho, from a Band of Four-
score Men.

Come, Death, you royal Gamester, and have a
final bout,

With a Yo, and a Ho, from a Band of Four-
score Men,—

For we are growing weary of the Revel and
the Rout,

And while the Dice are rattling, go Snuff
the Candle out,

With a Yo, and a Ho, from a Band of Four-
score Men.

They say the Devil has fled from Hell

To sail on the Spanish Main ;—

By the Thrice-sworn Spell—the Folk say well

When they say that the Devil has fled from Hell.

—EUGENE R. WHITE.



DRAWING BY RAYMOND CROSBY

A POSY

I LOVED my Love. The spring was fair,
The hedgerows gleamed with violets blue;
You doubt I loved — but I can swear
The violets knew!

I loved my Love. We met and kissed
Among the wheat where poppies grew;
They feigned to dream — but I insist
The poppies knew.

I loved my Love, but love grew cold.
The sunflower's face was wet with dew;
His gold crest drooped — you could have told
The sunflower knew.

I lost my Love. Amid the snow
We laid my Love whose heart was true.
And there, as flowers may weep and know,
The snowdrops knew.

BEATRICE ROSENTHAL.

A WINTER'S WALK IN CARRICK
AND GALLOWAY

AT the famous bridge of Doon, Kyle, the central district of the shire of Ayr, marches with Carrick, the most southerly. On the Carrick side of the river rises a hill of somewhat gentle conformation, cleft with shallow dells, and sown here and there with farms and tufts of wood. Inland, it loses itself, joining, I suppose, the great herd of similar hills that occupies the center of the Lowlands. Towards the sea, it swells out the coast-line into a protuberance, like

a bay-window in a plan, and is fortified against the surf behind bold crags. This hill is known as the Brown Hill of Carrick, or, more shortly, Brown Carrick.

It had snowed overnight. The fields were all sheeted up; they were tucked in among the snow, and their shape was modelled through the pliant counterpane, like children tucked in by a fond mother. The wind had made ripples and folds upon the surface, like what the sea, in quiet weather, leaves upon the sand. There was a frosty stifle in the air. An effusion of coppery light on the summit of Brown Carrick showed where the sun was trying to look through; but along the horizon clouds of cold fog had settled down, so that there was no distinction of sky and sea. Over the white shoulders of the headlands, or in the opening of bays, there was nothing but a great vacancy and blackness; and the road as it drew near the edge of the cliff seemed to skirt the shores of creation and void space.

The snow crunched underfoot, and at farms all the dogs broke out barking as they smelt a passer-by upon the road. I met a fine old fellow, who might have sat as the father in "The Cotter's Saturday Night," and who swore most heathenishly at a cow he was driving. And a little after I scraped acquaintance with a poor body tramping out to gather cockles. His face was wrinkled by exposure; it was broken up into flakes and channels, like mud beginning to dry, and weathered in two colours, an incongruous pink and grey. He had a faint air of being surprised—which, God knows, he might well be—that life had gone so ill with him. The shape of his trousers was in itself a jest, so strangely were they bagged and ravelled about his knees; and his coat was all bedaubed with clay as though he had lain in a rain-dub during the New Year's festivity. I will

own I was not sorry to think he had had a merry new year, and been young again for an evening ; but I was sorry to see the mark still there. One could not expect such an old gentleman to be much of a dandy, or a great student of respectability in dress ; but there might have been a wife at home, who had brushed out similar stains after fifty new years, now become old, or a round-armed daughter, who would wish to have him neat, were it only out of self-respect and for the ploughman sweetheart when he looks round at night. Plainly, there was nothing of this in his life, and years and loneliness hung heavily on his old arms. He was seventy-six, he told me ; and nobody would give a day's work to a man that age : they would think he could n't do it. " And, ' deed," he went on with a sad little chuckle, " ' deed, I doubt if I could." He said good-bye to me at a foot-path, and crippled wearily off to his work. It will make your heart ache if you think of his old fingers groping in the snow.

He told me I was to turn down beside the school-house for Dunure. And so, when I found a lone house among the snow and heard a babble of childish voices from within, I struck off into a steep road leading downwards to the sea. Dunure lies close under the steep hill — a haven among the rocks, a breakwater in consummate disrepair, much apparatus for drying nets, and a score or so of fishers' houses. Hard by, a few shards of ruined castle overhang the sea, a few vaults, and one tall gable honeycombed with windows. The snow lay on the beach to the tide-mark. It was daubed onto the sills of the ruin ; it roosted in the crannies of the rock like white sea-birds ; even on outlying reefs there would be a little cock of snow, like a toy light-house. Everything was grey and white in a cold and

dolorous sort of shepherd's plaid. In the profound silence, broken only by the noise of oars at sea, a horn was sounded twice ; and I saw the postman, girt with two bags, pause a moment at the end of the clachan for letters. It is, perhaps, characteristic of Dunure that none were brought him.

The people at the public-house did not seem well pleased to see me, and though I would fain have stayed by the kitchen fire, sent me "ben the hoose" into the guest-room. This guest-room at Dunure was painted in quite æsthetic fashion. There are rooms in the same taste, not a hundred miles from London, where persons of an extreme sensibility meet together without embarrassment. It was all in a fine dull bottle-green and black ; a grave, harmonious piece of colouring, with nothing, so far as coarser folk can judge, to hurt the better feelings of the most exquisite purist. A cherry-red half window blind kept up an imaginary warmth in the cold room, and threw quite a glow on the floor. Twelve cockle-shells and a halfpenny china figure were ranged solemnly along the mantelshelf. Even the spittoon was an original note, and, instead of saw-dust, contained sea-shells. And as for the hearth-rug, it would merit an article to itself, and a coloured diagram to help the text. It was patchwork, but the patchwork of the poor ; no glowing shreds of old brocade and Chinese silk, shaken together in the kaleidoscope of some tasteful housewife's fancy ; but a work of art in its own way, and plainly a labour of love. The patches came exclusively from people's raiment. There was no colour more brilliant than a heather mixture ; "My Johnnie's grey breeks," well polished over the oar on the boat's thwart, entered largely into its composition. And the spoils of an old black cloth coat, that had been many a Sunday to

church, added something (save the mark !) of preciousness to the material.

While I was at luncheon four carters came in — long-limbed, muscular Ayrshire Scots, with lean, intelligent faces. Four quarts of stout were ordered ; they kept filling the tumbler with the other hand as they drank ; and in less time than it takes me to write these words the four quarts were finished — another round was proposed, discussed and negatived — and they were creaking out of the village with their carts.

The ruins drew you towards them. You never saw any place more desolate from a distance, nor one that less belied its promise near at hand. Some crows and gulls flew away croaking as I scrambled in. The snow had drifted into the vaults. The clachan dabbled with snow, the white hills, the black sky, the sea marked in the coves with faint circular wrinkles, the whole world, as it looked from a loophole in Dunure, was cold, wretched and out-at-elbows. If you had been a wicked baron and compelled to stay there all the afternoon, you would have had a rare fit of remorse. How you would have heaped up the fire and gnawed your fingers ! I think it would have come to homicide before the evening — if it were only for the pleasure of seeing something red ! And the masters of Dunure, it is to be noticed, were remarkable of old for inhumanity. One of these vaults where the snow had drifted was that "black voute" where "Mr. Alane Stewart, Commendator of Crossraguel," endured his fiery trials. On the first and seventh of September, 1570 (ill dates for Mr. Alan !), Gilbert, Earl of Cassilis, his chaplain, his baker, his cook, his pantryman, and another servant bound the poor Commendator "betwix an iron chimlay and a fire," and there cruelly roasted him until he signed away his

abbacy. It is one of the ugliest stories of an ugly period, but not, somehow, without such a flavour of the ridiculous as makes it hard to sympathize quite seriously with the victim. And it is consoling to remember that he got away at last, and kept his abbacy, and, over and above, had a pension from the Earl until he died.

Some way beyond Dunure a wide bay, of somewhat less unkindly aspect, opened out. Colzean plantations lay all along the steep shore, and there was a wooded hill towards the centre, where the trees made a sort of shadowy etching over the snow. The road went down and up, and past a blacksmith's cottage that made fine music in the valley. Three compatriots of Burns drove up to me in a cart. They were all drunk, and asked me jeeringly if this was the way to Dunure. I told them it was; and my answer was received with unfeigned merriment. One gentleman was so much tickled, he nearly fell out of the cart; indeed, he was only saved by a companion, who either had not so fine a sense of humour or had drunken less.

"The toun of Mayboll," says the inimitable Abercrommie,* "stands upon an ascending ground from east to west, and lyes open to the south. It hath one principall street, with houses upon both sides, built of freestone; and it is beautifyed with the situation of two castles, one at each end of this street. That on the east belongs to the Erle of Cassilis. On the west end is a castle, which belonged sometime to the laird of Blairquan, which is now the tolbuith, and is adorned with a pyremide [conical roof], and a row of ballesters round it raised from the top of the staircase, into which they have mounted a fyne clock. There be four lanes which

*William Abercrombie. See "Fasti Ecclesie Scotticane," under "Maybole." (Part III.)

pass from the principall street ; one is called the Back Vennel, which is steep, declining to the southwest, and leads to a lower street, which is far larger than the high chief street, and it runs from the Kirkland to the Well Trees, in which there have been many pretty buildings, belonging to the severall gentry of the countrey, who were wont to resort thither in winter, and divert themselves in converse together at their owne houses. It was once the principall street of the town ; but, many of these houses of the gentry having been decayed and ruined, it has lost much of its ancient beautie. Just opposite to this vennel, there is another that leads north-west, from the chiefe street to the green, which is a pleasant plott of ground, enclosed round with an earthen wall, wherein they were wont to play football, but now at the Gowff and byasse-bowls. The houses of this towne, on both sides of the street, have their several gardens belonging to them ; and in the lower street there be some pretty orchards, that yield store of good fruit." As Patterson says, this description is near enough even to-day, and is mighty nicely written to boot. I am bound to add, of my own experience, that Maybole is tumble-down and dreary. Prosperous enough in reality, it has an air of decay ; and though the population has increased, a roofless house, every here and there, seems to protest the contrary. The women are more than well favoured, and the men fine tall fellows ; but they look slipshod and dissipated. As they slouched at street corners, or stood about gossiping in the snow, it seemed they would have been more at home in the slums of a large city than here in a country place betwixt a village and a town. I heard a great deal about drinking, and a great deal about religious revivals : two things in which the Scottish character is emphatic and most unlovely. In particular,

I heard of clergymen who were employing their time in explaining to a delighted audience the physics of the Second Coming. It is not very likely any of us will be asked to help. If we were, it is likely we should receive instructions for the occasion, and that on more reliable authority. And so I can only figure to myself a congregation truly curious in such flights of theological fancy, as one of veteran and accomplished saints, who have fought the good fight to an end and outlived all worldly passion, and are to be regarded rather as a part of the Church Triumphant than the poor, imperfect company on earth. And yet I saw some young fellows about the smoking-room who seemed, in the eyes of one who cannot count himself strait-laced, in need of some more practical sort of teaching. They seemed only eager to get drunk, and to do so speedily. It was not much more than a week after the New Year; and to hear them return on their past bouts with a gusto unspeakable was not altogether pleasing. Here is one snatch of talk, for the accuracy of which I can vouch.

"Ye had a spree here last Thursday?"

"We had that!"

"I wasnae able to be oot o' my bed. Man, I was awful bad on Wednesday."

"Aye, ye were gey bad."

And you should have seen the bright eyes, and heard the sensual accents! They recalled their doings with devout gusto and a sort of rational pride. Schoolboys, after their first drunkenness, are not more boastful; a cock does not plume himself with a more unmingled satisfaction as he paces forth among his harem; and yet these were grown men, and by no means short of wit. It was hard to suppose they were very eager about the Second Coming: it seemed as if some

elementary notions of temperance for the men and seemliness for the women would have gone nearer the mark. And yet, as it seemed to me typical of much that is evil in Scotland, Maybole is also typical of much that is best. Some of the factories, which have taken the place of weaving in the town's economy, were originally founded and are still possessed by self-made men of the sterling, stout old breed — fellows who made some little bit of an invention, borrowed some little pocketful of capital, and then, step by step, in courage, thrift, and industry, fought their way upward to an assured position.

Abercummie has told you enough of the Tolbooth ; but, as a bit of spelling, this inscription on the Tolbooth bell seems too delicious to withhold : " This bell is founded at Maiboll Bi Danel Geli, a Frenchman, the 6th November 1696, Bi appointment of the heritors of the parish of Maiyboll." The Castle deserves more notice. It is a large and shapely tower, plain from the ground upward, but with a zone of ornamentation running about the top. In a general way this adornment is perched on the very summit of the chimney-stacks ; but there is one corner more elaborate than the rest. A very heavy string-course runs round the upper storey, and just above this, facing up the street, the tower carries a small oriel window, fluted and corbelled and carved about with stone heads. It is so ornate it has somewhat the air of a shrine. And it was, indeed, the casket of a very precious jewel, for in the room to which it gives light lay, for long years, the heroine of the sweet old ballad of " Johnnie Faa " — she who, at the call of the gipsies' songs, " came tripping down the stair, and all her maids before her." Some people say the ballad has no basis in fact, and have written, I

believe, unanswerable papers to the proof. But in the face of all that, the very look of that high oriel window convinces the imagination, and we enter into all the sorrows of the imprisoned dame. We conceive the burthen of the long, lack-lustre days, when she leaned her sick head against the mullions, and saw the burghers loafing in Maybole High Street, and the children at play, and ruffling gallants riding by from hunt or foray. We conceive the passion of odd moments, when the wind threw up to her some snatch of song, and her heart grew hot within her, and her eyes overflowed at the memory of the past. And even if the tale be not true of this or that lady, or this or that old tower, it is true in the essence of all men and women. For all of us, some time or other, hear the gipsies singing; over all of us is the glamour cast. Some resist and sit resolutely by the fire. Most go and are brought back again, like Lady Cassilis. A few of the tribe of Waring go and are seen no more; only now and again, at spring-time, when the gipsies' song is afloat in the amethyst evening, we can catch their voices in the glen.

By night it was clearer, and Maybole more visible than during the day. Clouds coursed over the sky in great masses; the full moon battled the other way, and lit up the snow with gleams of flying silver; the town came down the hill in a cascade of brown gables, bestridden by smooth white roofs, and spangled here and there with lighted windows. At either end the snow stood high up in the darkness, on the peak of the Tolbooth and among the chimneys of the Castle. As the moon flashed a bull's-eye glitter across the town between the racing clouds, the white roofs leaped into relief over the gables and the chimney-stacks, and their shadows over the white roofs. In the town itself the lit

face of the clock peered down the street ; an hour was hammered out on Mr. Geli's bell, and from behind the red curtains of a public-house someone trolled out — a compatriot of Burns, again ! — “The saut tear blin's my e'e.”

Next morning there was sun and a flapping wind. From the street corners of Maybole I could catch breezy glimpses of green fields. The road underfoot was wet and heavy — part ice, part snow, part water ; and anyone I met greeted me, by way of salutation, with, “A fine thowe” (thaw). My way lay among rather bleak hills, and past bleak ponds and dilapidated castles and monasteries to the Highland-looking village of Kirkoswald. It has little claim to notice, save that Burns came there to study surveying in the summer of 1777, and there also, in the kirkyard, the original of Tam o' Shanter sleeps his last sleep. It is worth noticing, however, that this was the first place I thought “Highland-looking.” Over the hill from Kirkoswald a farm road leads to the coast. As I came down above Turnberry, the sea view was indeed strangely different from the day before. The cold fogs were all blown away ; and there was Ailsa Craig, like a refraction, magnified and deformed, of the Bass Rock ; and there were the chiselled mountain tops of Arran, veined and tipped with snow ; and behind and fainter the low, blue land of Cantyre. Cottony clouds stood, in a great castle, over the top of Arran, and blew out in long streamers to the south. The sea was bitten all over with white ; little ships, tacking up and down the Firth, lay over at different angles in the wind. On Shanter, they were ploughing lea ; a cart foal, all in a field by himself, capered and whinnied as if the spring were in him.

The road from Turnberry to Girvan lies along the shore, among sand-hills and by wildernesses of tumbled bent. Every here and there a few cottages stood together beside a bridge. They had one odd feature, not easy to describe in words : a triangular porch projected from above the door, supported at the apex by a single upright post ; a secondary door was hinged to the post and could be hasped on either cheek of the real entrance ; so, whether the wind was north or south, the cottar could make himself a triangular bight of shelter where to set his chair and finish a pipe with comfort. There is one objection to this device : for, as the post stands in the middle of the fairway, anyone precipitately issuing from the cottage must run his chance of a broken head. So far as I am aware, it is peculiar to the little corner of country about Girvan. And that corner is noticeable for more reasons : it is certainly one of the most characteristic districts in Scotland. It has this movable porch by way of architecture ; it has, as we shall see, a sort of remnant of provincial costume, and it has the handsomest population in the Lowlands.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

[The above is one of its author's early "Essays of the Road." Why left unfinished I cannot remember or guess, for it seems to me one of the most pleasing and characteristic of its class. It records the first part of a walking tour of some seventy miles, undertaken by Stevenson for health's sake (and with very good effects), between the 8th and the 17th of January, 1876.]

SIDNEY COLVIN.]



PORTRAIT OF ROSAMUND MARRIOTT WATSON

THE DEAD OAK

THE November day was drawing to a close. The shadows were deepening in the pine forest that lay on one side of the sandy road. On the other side, the corn stalks stood in level rows against the yellow of the sunset. My horse limped painfully, for he had cast a shoe several hours since, and my hurried ride through a thinly inhabited part of lower Maryland, with which I was unfamiliar, had so far brought me near no blacksmith's shop. Great, then, was my relief, on passing the wood, to find a three-cross roads, a small house with a shed from which rang the measured stroke of the anvil, while the square of the door was ruddy with the forge fire.

After calling loudly and waiting in vain for a reply, I dismounted. Just then the blacksmith came to the door, a big, low-browed, long-haired fellow, of few words. After examining my horse's feet, he announced that it would be necessary to replace not only the missing shoe, but also three others.

As he proceeded slowly to work, I saw that there was before me the prospect of a long wait which did not promise to be agreeable, for the man was either surly or stupid, and gave out monosyllabic replies in answer to my questions about the country. A dreary country it was, that through which I was passing; flat, sandy, impoverished, the virtue having been tilled out of the soil for two hundred years. Now that the old landed proprietors had departed to the cities, the majority of the inhabitants were miserable poor whites and negroes, principally fishermen and oystermen. Here and there one came across a relic of the past, an old manor house, ruined or deserted, the property generally of one man, a

former overseer, who seemed to own most of the country.

And yet there was a charm of the past over this low-lying land—a blaze of glory in the west, reflected in the broad river that almost lapped the roots of the huge pine forests that grew along its banks.

As I stood at the door of the smithy, looking eastward, I could see only one exception to this sombre monotony of pines. On the roadside, in the middle of a dense sweep of meadows, entirely isolated, stood a huge oak tree, the only one of its kind to be seen for miles around.

“That must be a pretty old tree,” I remarked.

“The Dead Oak? Many a hundred years old, I reckon.”

“It does n’t look dead to me,” I answered; “it has a dense foliage.”

“That’s what they call it—the Dead Oak. A man hung himself to it three years ago,” said the smith, with some show of animation.

“One of the neighborhood?”

“No; a stranger round here. Nobody ever could find out where he come from, Washington likely. The niggers say it’s ha’nted.”

“How is that?” I asked, much interested.

“Don’t know; just ha’nted,” said the man, gruffly, relapsing into silence amid a fire of sparks.

Leaving my taciturn companion, I sauntered down to the road, my steps turning intuitively in the direction of the old tree.

A chill wind came from the river, and a flight of crows with harsh cries arose from its branches, as it stood, the central landmark in the stretch of meadows. On one side of the road was a zigzag rail fence, and on the top-

most rail of this, under the tree, I seated myself. The lowest branches almost touched my head, and the dry and dense foliage rustled with every breeze.

Just beyond were two wooden posts, the entrance of a carriage-way leading through a corn-field to what I had not noticed before, a large house far back from the road. As I sat there, facing the afterglow of the sunset, I became aware of the figure of an old negro coming slowly through the corn-rows, through the gate,—a bent negro with bushy white hair. Taking off his rabbit-skin cap, with a courtly bow he seated himself on the roots of the tree.

For some moments we sat there in silence, the old man with his hands folded, gazing into the west.

"Good evening, uncle," I ventured to remark. "Do you live near here?"

"Not far away—up dat a-way," waving his hand indefinitely in the direction of the shadowy mansion.

"Have you lived here long?" I asked.

"Many an' many a year," he responded wearily. "Ebber sence I cum inter de world. I belonged to Mars' Brooke up yonder."

"Then you must know about the man who hung himself here three years ago?"

"He war n't no man," said the old darky sternly.

"He wuz first quality, my young gen'leman. I ought ter know, kase I buried him bofe times."

At these words, suddenly a thrill ran over me, a sense of mystery, something accursed brooding over this desolate spot.

"What do you mean?" I demanded. "Who was he?"

"Befo' de Lord, boss, I don' know, an' nobody else does. It came about dis 'er way: De first time wuz

years an' years ago. Dar wuz good times in de country den. De quality had n't all gone away an' sol' de ole places to oberseers an' po' white trash. Mars' Harry Brooke wuz keepin' bachelor's hall up dar, an' many's de high ol' times and junketings dey had. Well, one night dey had a gran' time, a-drinkin' an' a-carryin' on, he an' de udder young gemlemens. 'Bout day de party bruk up, kase de wuz sober enuff den ter ride home. I wuz a young chap den, an' I wuz runnin' on in front ter open de' gate, bar'footed, from de door, kase it war hot weather den, like Injum summer. When I open' de gate I scrich' out 'O Gord!' an' I like ter fall ter de groun', kase dar, wid his face all white an' orful 'gainst de red leaves, a-lookin' me right in de eyes, wuz a man tied to der branch, wid a white han'chif aroun' his neck. It did n't take me long ter jump fo'ward an' take him down, an' when de gemlemen rid up dar he wuz a-lyin' on de groun' an' me a-settin' right hyar on dis same stump wid his curly head on my knees. He war n't quite dead an' his han' kotch mine, an' his beautiful brown eyes closed a minute, an' he gasped like an' died. All de gemlemen dat came up an' stan' 'roun', dey say dey nebber see any one so handsom' ez my young man wuz, jes like one er de marble statues in de parlor, wid a eagle nose, an' a mouth many a young lady must 'a' kissed. But dose days wuz ober fur him fur ebber,— yes, mon.

"De quarest thing wuz, he did n't hab nuthin' on but a shirt, an' dat wuz de fines' quality, real linin, embroidered, but no mark or sign on it ter tell whar he cum from. Nobod'y aint nebber seed him befo' in dis part ob de kentry. Mars' Harry sont all ober the kentry, clar up ter Washin'ton an' Baltimor', but nobody cum fo'ward ter claim him, so he wuz buried. De parson say he can't be buried in de cons'crated groun', kus he mus'

a kill' hisself, so me an' anudder man buried him in de medder, under dis tree, right nigh whar you is a-settin'."

The old man's narrative ran on monotonously. It seemed as natural, as much a part of the scene, as the croaking of the frogs in the deepening twilight, in which it seemed that I could almost see that white face with its aquiline nose and large brown eyes.

"Dat wuz long ago, long ago," the old man resumed, "long ago. De War come an' went, an' Marse Harry wuz killed, an' de firs' people lef' de kentry and de kentry wuz like new-made sod, dirt up'ards; but I nebber fo'got my young gemleman, real quality, hangin' hyar in dis tree, away from all his people. Well, boss, many years parse, an' Mars Harry's oberseer done bought de ole place up dar. One night 'bout three years ago dey gib one er dese hyar big abricultural suppers, an' dey set dare all night eatin' an' drinkin', like dere betters used ter do. It wuz de same time er year, but misty an' damp, an' in de early mornin' I wuz comin' long de road an' I see a crowd gaddered aroun' de tree, jus' like it wuz dat udder mornin' long time ago. When I come up, boss, for Gord! dar wuz my young, beautiful gemleman a-lyin' on de groun', stiff an' stark, in his shirt, wid dat hankerchief 'roun his neck. I wuz glad ter see him ag'in, but he warn't nearly alive, like he wuz befo'. De doctor wuz dere, an' he felt him an' he say, 'Dis man bin dead fo' days. Who has hang dis corpse to dis tree? Who is de man?' Jes like dey say befo', 'Who is de man?' Nobody remember' him 'cept'n' me. De ole crowd dat wuz dere befo', de quality, dey all parsed 'way, what wid de War an' one thing ur nudder, all gone but me. But I nebber said nuthin' ter be called ole crazy nigger, — no, mon. Dare he wuz, shore 'nuff, de same eagle nose an' brown eyes an' curls, de same leetle

scratch, like de razor done scratch him on de chin. I knowed him, an' I cyarried him; none er dem common folks ain't tetched him. Dey abertised eberywhar, but nobody ain't answer. 'Case dey can't. Dey warn't nobody lef' ter answer 'cept me," and the old man gave an eerie chuckle. "De doctors an' de lawyers talk it all ober, but dey cayn't agree, an' de parson, one er dese hyar new kind, he say he kin be buried in de churchyard, but de people make a fuss, kase he mought er bin a su'cide. So I helped bury him ag'in. Seems like I wuz specially 'pinted ter be his body-sarvant; dis time it's right outside de churchyard, an' nobody don't know it's him but me, kase dey all passed away."

A pale, watery moon had emerged, the wind soughed among the pine trees, and away off an owl hooted.

"De nex' time I's gwine to bury him right in de churchyard. He gwine ter come once mo', an' I aint gwine ter die till den, an' dat time he's gwine ter be buried in the churchyard, an' he won't come no mo', an' den I'll pass away."

A shout came through the dusk from the smithy:

"Say, mister, come; here's your horse." The other words were indistinguishable. I arose and started up the road reluctantly, longing to know more of the mystery. The old man again removed his cap, and so I left him, motionless, seated in the shadows, facing the faint glow in the west. My horse was ready when I reached the forge, the blacksmith standing dark and massive in the doorway.

"An old negro has just been telling me a remarkable story," I said, after mounting; "that there have been two suicides found hanging to the old oak, one long ago."

"Can't say," answered the blacksmith, impassively and

stolidly. "Ain't lived here very long myself. Always been called the 'Dead Oak' ever since I knowed it."

"Well, do you know an old negro with a bushy white head and beard, who lives near the Brooke House? Who is he?"

"Might be old Sam, or Lige, or Cash. Lots of 'em round here," answered the man, and that was all he would say.

I mounted and rode off rapidly, for there were still six hours of travel before reaching my destination.

The moonlight was faint and chill, silvering the dry foliage of the old tree. I drew rein under it, and peered vainly into the shadows for the darker outlines of the old negro; he had disappeared, but it seemed to me he was still present, sitting on the gnarled root, with the pallid face of that young old corpse against his knee, waiting.

The owl hooted. A faint light shone from the dim mansion in the fields, and I pressed on through a belt of low pines. When some distance on my way I turned and looked back. The glow of the smithy was hidden. All the low stretch of land was folded in twilight, and against the pale sky the Dead Oak stood spectral and alone.

ANNA VERNON DORSEY.



SCHLOMA, THE DAUGHTER OF
SCHMUHL

“**A**BER, Schloma !”

Schmuhl spoke in an impatient tone to his daughter. It was less than an hour since he had chided her for stopping work to gaze out of the window, and already she had forgotten. She was a good girl, and the old Jew loved his child dearly, but her frivolity was a sore trouble to him. It boded ill for her future. The other tenants warned him time and again. They blamed him for having sent Schloma to the schools so long that with the English she had acquired the Christian love of pleasure. Sometimes they complained of her as a bad example to the other women and children.

That very morning, when Schmuhl returned from prayers, one of the men downstairs met him at the pump in the hall and remonstrated with him about his daughter's conduct. She had been singing all the while he was gone, and so loudly that her voice rang throughout the tenement. They were Schickse (Christian) songs too.

“Pass auf, Schmuhl,” the man had said, shaking his head. “Look out, my friend, or your daughter will be bad. Let her labor long and be silent, that her son's sons may sing songs.”

Schloma had wept bitterly when her father repeated to her what had been said. But she was soon smiling again and humming street songs over her sewing. Her light spirit was irrepressible. The old man sighed, and at intervals he scolded her all day long. For everything that passed outside their rear window distracted her attention from the work. Once, when tears were still glittering in her eyes, she had laughed outright ; and at what ?

just because the pigeon-thief who had his traps on the Ludlow Street roofs fell off one house on to another.

Schmuhl was relieved when it grew so dark that they had to light the lamp. He set it on the table, as far as possible from the window, and after supper the work went better. Both father and daughter wished to finish a dozen "pants" that night, he to get the pay, she for the pleasure of carrying them through the lively streets to the "sweater." For two silent hours their hands moved eagerly. Then the task was done, and they rose together and stretched the stiffness out of their joints. Schmuhl knelt to bind the bundle on the floor, while Schloma hurried into her dress. When she was ready, she bent her back, and her father lifted and adjusted the load. He opened the door for her, bade her a "baldigst' Wiederkehr," and, as she disappeared, he stood there reckoning under his beard:

"Zwelve in der bundle, done in a' Tag; achtzig cent. In sex Tag' four dollar' achtzig. Der week, also, a' dollar forty, sechzig — wenn Schloma's good, dann a dollar eighty to capital. Ach!"

Schloma was singing again. Her cheerful voice came back from the dark stairs like a blow to his heart. He threw up his hands in despair.

"Ach, wei d' Schuh, wei d' Schuh!" he cried. "Will mein' Tochter be bat? Weh, Schloma, Schloma, mein Kind, mein Kind!"

The old man sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands, weeping.

Schloma sang joyously and thoughtlessly. If she had thought, she would not have sung at all, for she knew and dreaded the scorn she and her cheerfulness aroused in her neighbors. For years they had looked at her "over the shoulder." The children regarded her with wonder and

vague suspicion. The women stared with fierce female malice at her. And the men, with an eye to their women, muttered curses on her head. But Schloma could not remember. The universal disapproval depressed her dreadfully, but she could not confine her gaiety long, and sometimes her spirit rebelled secretly against her surroundings.

She had three floors of sweat-shops to pass before she could reach the street. The doors of all stood open, gaping for air. Her song, dancing on ahead of her, struck into the groups of sullen labor, and mocked the dismal discontent like a laugh.

When the girl stepped into the hall on the third story, she saw the buttonhole-makers were watching for her. Her heart quailed from the sight she could not help but look in upon. There they all sat, men, women, and children, silent, motionless, upright, and glaring their withering hatred at her. The song was choked in her throat; its spirit died in a sob.

But the killing light was quickly passed, and in the dark she lifted her voice again. It cost an effort for pride to keep up even the pretense of a song, for she thought now of the others below. Somehow the dread was greater to-night than ever. Still she sang on, determined not to see.

She had to hear, however. As she approached the pressers' door, the sound of suppressed giggling and scoffing comments reached her. She sped through the bar of light, shrinking together as if every ray were a human sneer. Then, as she fled, she caught, hissed through a woman's teeth after her, the word "Schickse."

"A Christian! She a' Schickse? Nay, oh nay."

Schloma could have cried, so deeply was she wounded. Hot indignation helped her now, however, and she marched boldly down the stairs to where the finishers were.

They stood crowded up to the doorway to humiliate her.

"There she is," said a woman with a child in her arms.

The others laughed and pointed their bony fingers at the trembling girl.

"Shame, shame! Du unverschämtes Weib, shame!"

It was awful. They had never gone so far as that in their wrath before. Schloma was silenced. She was about to scream and run when some young girl, raising her voice above the rest, shouted:

"Schickse, Schickse — Nafke! Pfui!"

Then Schloma sang defiance back, and strode down into the street.

It was Essex Street, near Grand. The crowd and the darkness were comforting to the harassed girl, who stood there still now and dizzy in the human stream. Around her flowed the tired shop-workers, a sluggish, serious tide, which sparkled here and there with the merry troops of youthful idlers out for fun. She saw nothing.

"Hello, Schloma, komm doch mit."

They were street-girls she used to know, who hailed her.

"Ya, Schloma, komm. Es is' besser as packen pants."

But Schloma did not hear.

"Schickse! Nafke! *Nafke!* Ach!" she cried, repeating the horrid words she had heard. Her street friends thought she meant them.

"Es is' besser wie packen pants," they replied in scorn, and passed with a laugh and a song.

The poor girl saw what she had done, and bitter tears rose to her eyes.

"Cha, es ist better — better as alles oben," she thought; "besser wie alles is' ever gewese."

The bundle was heavy. Slowly she turned, and like an animal instinctively went her way toward the "sweater's." Again and again girls and young men she knew called to her greetings and invitations. But Schloma did not heed them. She plodded on through Essex Street to Hester, where her "sweater" lived. He took the roll, inspected it piece by piece, counting to himself. Then he grumbled a while and paid the girl. He saw her tears, but he said nothing, and she went away.

With the load off her back, Schloma's heart grew lighter. Her face was set toward home, but her eyes were on the lookout for the next group of friends.

They came with a scamper, tittering out of a dark side street, and burst into laughter and shouts as they landed in the light.

"Ei, was! du, Schloma? So a' Glueck. Ge's' d' mit? Na, come."

And Schloma went.

At midnight her father, old Schmuhl on the fifth, and the weary workers below, were looking out of the windows back across the courts. Through the clothes-lines they could see, in a room on the next street rear, a merry troop of men and girls, drinking and singing and laughing and dancing.

"Schma b'ni," muttered the neighbors. "Schloma, the daughter of Schmuhl, is bad. Let the women work and be silent that our sons' sons may be glad."

And Schmuhl, the aged, wept and rent the hem of his shirt, crying "Ei wei, wei d' Schuh! Mein child is' a' Schickse, a' Nafke! Pfui!" J. L. STEFFENS.



B.
C.
DAY.

SUMMER

NOTES

¶ Next autumn is to see the publication of a new drama by Ibsen, and we are also promised the farce of keeping its title a profound secret until the very day of publication. This clever advertising scheme was tried with "Little Eyolf," and the newspapers reported the admirable sight of the master weeping crocodile tears over the fact that a printer had disclosed the secret, and thereby ensured the book an extra column or two in nearly every journal in Christendom.

¶ In Sweden, Augustus Strindberg, whose reputation in his own country is almost as great as Ibsen's in Norway, has given up writing, and is engaged in extensive researches in chemistry. His day has come and gone, and we as yet know nothing of him here. I had expected that he might engage our attention for a few months at least—we are sadly in need of new fads. But, so far as I know, he has never been translated except in one volume of youthful stories, published avowedly as erotica by a Chicago house.

It is curious that the lists of such publications are often catholic in range and supply a knowledge of foreign literature not otherwise obtainable. An incident happened about a year ago which illustrates this. Mr. William Heinemann, the well-known English publisher, was preparing to issue in his Pioneer Series a book called *Woman's Folly*, a translation from the Italian of Gemma Ferrugia. The story as to morality is neither better nor worse than a hundred novels of the last two years which we have all read. As to force and dramatic power it is measurably the superior of most of them. Furthermore, the volume was enriched and sanctified by an introductory essay from

the pen of Edmund Gosse, than whom there is no one more respectable.

Now, by a chance combination of circumstances, this book failed to find an American publisher, and was issued in English unprotected by a copyright in America. It was immediately seized upon by an adventurous house and put forth in lurid paper covers, which, together with the publisher's name, suggested its unfitness for publication. It remains unknown and scorned, while, with copyright and cloth covers, it might have hoped for the distinguished consideration of ladies' book-clubs.

¶ By way of prelude to the extraordinary tale of graphomania which follows, I must recall to the minds of habitual readers of the *CHAP-BOOK* some verses in the May 15th issue. They began thus :

“The joy in me rises, rises ;
And will not be suppressed,
The joy in me rises, rises
Into my throat and breast.”

I have now on my desk a letter written in a ladylike hand on Marcus Ward & Co.'s Irish linen stamped with a genteel crest. It is as follows:

EDITOR OF THE *CHAP-BOOK* :

Dear Sir :—I have just read the “Spring Song” in the first number of the fifth volume of *THE CHAP-BOOK*. I do not wish to be intrusive or inquisitive, but being a young housekeeper and so much interested in baking powders, I would be so pleased to know the kind of powder used by Eleanor B. Caldwell, as it must possess such wonderful rising qualities. An answer would much oblige a seeker after the best in all forms.

May 31, 1896.

As I said, the appearance of the letter suggests that

the writer is a female of distinction, which goes to make this exhibition of depravity all the more harrowing. It is well nigh incredible that any sane person could waste five minutes, paper, and two stamps (one enclosed for reply) on such a deliberate and well considered inanity. She could scarcely have hoped that her letter would be printed, so that desire for notoriety cannot be alleged to excuse her. She cannot have thought that she would gain my esteem or the reputation of having a pretty wit. It is a shameless case of love of writing for the love of writing.

¶[An actress, reading late at night the announcement of a new tale by Anthony Hope called "Phroso," rises with the dawn and flies to the office of the author's agent,



casting gold at his feet, and demanding the dramatic rights of the contemplated story. She finds, however, that six months ago they were sold, before the story was more than a will-o'-the-wisp in its author's mind.

This is a decorative example of the present state of literary affairs. Not a single novel or a play by a well-known author is brought fairly to the market and judged on its merits. Every editor or theatrical manager is forced into a frantic struggle for a pig in a poke, and he would better sit on the Delphic tripod than at his reading desk, for a spirit of prophecy is needed for his work rather than literary judgment. His problem will be something like this: Dr. A. Conan Doyle has agreed to have a long story of one hundred thousand words ready for the autumn of '98.

Before that time he has contracted for a volume of short stories, autumn of '97; a serial story of seventy-five thousand words for the spring of '98; a novelette for the autumn of '96; two plays for the winter of '96-'97, and something, possibly historical, which must be done meanwhile. The story for '98 "may be," says Dr. Doyle's agent, "the novel based on Chinese Gordon's life, which Doyle has for so long wanted to write," or "it may not be." On this very definite information the editor must decide what the probable quality of the story is, and what will be the vogue of its author after that length of time and these various other productions. Meanwhile, he is informed that rival magazines are eagerly outbidding each other to secure the prize. He buys the story. This is what is called editing; it appears to me to be vastly more like a gambling game, where in all cases the public "stands to lose." For I cannot believe that an author can say to himself: "At exactly 11:15 to-day I will feel inspired to write a sonnet, and by the 12th of September, two years from now, I shall have written the best story of my life, on a subject as yet unknown and to a length of ninety-five thousand five hundred and sixty words."

There is a scene in an old play which, as often happens in old plays, is very modern in spirit. It is a snatch of conversation from "Every Man in His Humour," by Ben Jonson, and is between Master Stephen, a country gull, and Master Matthew, a town gull. I can fancy it between two authors who habitually sell their work long before it is written.

S.: My name is Master Stephen, sir; I am this gentleman's own cousin, sir; his father is mine uncle, sir; I am somewhat melancholy, but you shall command me, sir, in whatsoever is incident to a gentleman.

M.: But are you, indeed, sir, so given to it?

S.: Ay, truly, sir, I am mightily given to melancholy.

M.: Oh, it's your only fine humour, sir! Your true melancholy breeds your perfect fine wit, sir. I am melancholy myself, divers times, sir, and then do I no more but take pen and paper presently, and overflow you half a score, or a dozen of sonnets at a sitting.

S.: Truly, sir, and I love such things, out of measure.

M.: Why, I pray you, sir, make use of my study; it's at your service.

S.: I thank you, sir; I shall be bold, I warrant you. Have you a stool there to be melancholy upon?

M.: That I have, sir, and some papers there of mine own doing at idle hours, that you'll say there's some sparks of wit in them, when you see them.

S.: Is it well? Am I melancholy enough?

And you, good Master Anthony Hope, have you perchance a stool to be witty and romantic upon?

¶ *The Bookman*, in its "Chronicle and Comment," is becoming frivolous, and, what is more, cock-sure. All this is inconsistent with its size and the dignity of Mr. Lowell's name on the cover. The pontifical tone in criticism is only allowed to the small magazines of *les jeunes* and to Mr. G. Bernard Shaw. It should be denied a journal measuring 7 x 10. I earnestly recommend to *The Bookman* that it become more ponderous.

¶ There are several magazines whose desire it has been to bring to public notice some of the younger writers whose names were not to be found in the pages of the older journals. In small measure they have accomplished this. Not to seem lacking in immodesty, *THE CHAP-BOOK* itself has tried to make its own "finds" of genius. Success



PORTRAIT OF ARTHUR MORRISON

has not, however, waited on its efforts in such measure that it has been enabled to dispense entirely with well known names.

So it is befitting that I should compliment the *Black Cat* on never having a name on its title page which any one has heard before or ever will hear again. Each new issue drags before us a new group of authors and consigns to eternal oblivion the unfortunates who were slaughtered to set before the public last month's banquet. I do not follow the frolics of the *Black Cat* too assiduously, yet I cannot remember twice to have seen the same name in a contents table. Some one has told me that the *Black Cat* is, in fact, written by a few clever hack-writers, who are engaged at a regular salary, and who write stories and invent imaginary authors for them. The system is not necessarily a bad one. If Mr. Marion Crawford, or Miss Adeline Seargent, could be secured, the *Black Cat* would need only one employé. Either of these persons would, however, have the good sense to invent plausible names. Take the issue of June for an example: McPherson Frazer has a flavor of reality about it, but can one possibly believe in Leo Gale, Mabel Shippie Clarke, Clarice Irene Clingham, or Geik Turner?

¶ Audiences at the Alhambra in London are being delighted by the dancing of two young girls who were born at Irkutsk in Siberia, and who moreover learned their steps and prancings there. It is a picturesque fact; no one had suspected the existence of a taste for the variety stage in Irkutsk. Yet a slight feeling of injury accompanies the discovery. The advantages and comforts of civilization are always more widely distributed than we think or even desire. Even when physically comforting, it is a downfall to metropolitan pride to find good hotels

in waste places, express trains on branch railroads, and variety shows in Irkutsk. We feel that there ought to be special compensations for those forced to live in the ordinary and commonplace regions.

¶ It seems likely that M. Zola's *Rome* will assume at once the position of auxiliary guide-book to the Celestial City. Like *The Marble Faun*, it will be produced in "luxurious editions richly embellished with half-tone pictures of all the leading sights of the city." As supplementary reading, it will have the position that Howells' *Venetian Life* has in Venice, or *Romola* in Florence.

That the stay of a few weeks in Rome should have given even M. Zola's encyclopædic mind such a grasp of the aspect and special atmosphere of modern Rome is remarkable; and that a man so busy has found time to acquire accurate and full knowledge of so many details of Rome's past is as much to be wondered at. Even a Baedeker guide-book is more than a mere compilation — it is rather the construction of a master mind. This power of ranging details and marshalling facts is admirable, no less in Zola than in Baedeker. Of the story, however, little is to be said; it is scarcely more than an incidental relief to the monotony of description.

¶ The author of *Rome* cannot be happy to see his novel relegated from the class of fiction to that of special and technical works. Yet if something of this sort were not occasionally done, the task of reading either contemporaneous or classical literature would be more nearly hopeless than it is now. It was Mr. Gosse, I think, who made the ingenious suggestion that classics of the language were being constantly put into school book form. From that moment, he said, no one felt it in any way

his duty to read them, and place was made for some new book as a *sine qua non* of cultured reading. This process has already engulfed most of the Greek and Latin writers, and in these days it threatens especially Shakespeare, who is "taught" in every primary class-room.

¶The publication of Mr. Henry Fuller's book, *The Puppet Booth*, affords most of its readers an opportunity to make the entirely superfluous criticism that for a real



theatre these little dramas are impossible. The fact was self-evident. The plays are for the closet if anything ever was. If you prefer a more modern expression and know the works of Maurice Maeterlinck you may call them plays for marionettes.

I suppose when we began to read Maeterlinck we were most of us told that his was a theatre not for real people but for puppet actors. The idea was so startling that we half believed, but in the end it came to seem pitifully ludicrous and impossible. We shall welcome, therefore, M. Maeterlinck's own statement, in a book to be issued by Stone & Kimball, that he had in mind no creatures of wire and wood. The apparent inconsistency of this position he explains in a manner as ingenious as it is over-subtle.

As author he felt that human beings buried in the depths of primeval forests or in the cavernous vaults of Middle-Age castles would chant their monotonous Maeterlinckian speech only to be ridiculous. The ordinary

puppet would do as badly. In short, the new drama wanted a wholly new protagonist, and, instead of frankly calling this creature a figment of the reader's imagination, he dubbed it "marionette."

The possibilities of the puppet show are so little known in this country that we were more startled and less easily deceived by this choice of name than the compatriots of M. Maeterlinck and Europeans in general. We have but one drama, *Punch and Judy*, and this has palled on the adult spectator, as, in the end, all farce comedy must. In Latin countries the repertory of these midgets is more varied.

In Geneva I remember being spell-bound while *les guignols* enacted a soul-stirring melodrama called *La Dame Blanche*, in which there was a haunted castle, an apparition, and a ghostly warning.

In Italy the *marionetti* are of almost life size, hung from above and worked with wires. The powers they display are at least equal to those of the average traveling company. Indeed, in our own Boston, not long ago, in a squalid room in North Street, there was a troupe of marionettes, giving in Italian "The Most Tragical History and Adventures of the King, Charles the Great, and his Paladins." Before the staring eyes of a few Italian newsboys and an occasional thrice happy Harvard student this tale of woe and courage was bravely played. The third act was a battle, and not until the stage was piled three feet deep with the corpses of the entire company did the curtain fall.

In Italy one occasionally sees really beautiful performances. I remember a scene in one at Florence, representing the carnival at Venice. There was a ballet, and I can swear that the pirouettes of the *première danseuse* recalled the days of Fanny Ellsler.

¶ *The Critic* reprints in an advertisement, and thus stamps with its approval, the following from *The Illustrated London News*:

"The *New York Critic* makes a point of the fact that it has never allowed into its columns any reviews of books by members of its staff, and that no reviews have ever appeared of books by Mr. Richard Watson Gilder, solely because he is the brother of the editors. This is a claim which those who are in the habit of sneering at the freedoms of American journalism will do well to bear in mind. In our own country there is no such diffidence among editors."

The Critic appears well satisfied, but it seems to me that a clear case of cowardice and mean, small thinking has been proven against it. The inference is that in case *The Critic* were personally interested it would be incapable of judging justly, or at least of printing anything but praise. In other words, it cannot conceive of praise as other than truckling and log-rolling for the benefit of friends.

Now, the publication of a book by Mr. Richard Watson Gilder may not be a great event. It is, however, an event which must of necessity be recorded in a journal as seriously devoted to literature as *The Critic* purports to be. It is an insult to the author not to praise his book, insinuating that the public will not believe sincere praise possible.

Why does Miss Gilder's system stop with her brother and the *Critic* staff? How does she dare to mention a book if she has dined with its author? Or, if Mr. George Meredith were to marry Miss Gilder, would *The Critic* henceforward never mention the name of our greatest novelist?

